

Gay marriage is about rights and equality, not religion.

Here in Australia we have a proud tradition of secularism. It is with good reason that church and state are separate. Yet the only reason gay marriage is denied is ultimately because of the views of a religious minority who wish to impose their beliefs on the laws of our nation.

Australia is currently fighting a war in Afghanistan against religious extremists who, like the christian opponents of gay marriage, see the law of their "god" as higher than the law of the land. Fundamentalist religious groups like the Australian Christian Lobby and Saltshakers who are leading the campaign against equal rights ultimately have similar beliefs as the jihadists Australia is at war against.

By opposing same-sex marriage, the churches are showing that they have not accepted secular society. Like the Taliban, they still have a sharia law mentality as they assert that religious beliefs should be upheld in common law.

My question to the conservative senators who oppose gay marriage is how can you support a war in Afghanistan against religious extremists, but allow religious extremists to influence the law here and deny rights to people who simply just love each other and want to get married? It would therefore be hypocritical of you to continue to oppose gay marriage.

I urge Senators to support the rights of Australians to marry someone of their choice, be it of the same or opposite sex. To do otherwise would be to reject our proud traditions of freedom, equality and secularism.

Thankyou for the opportunity to make this submission.

Stephen Kress